

CHAPTER II



PLOTS

In his notebook Hardy gives us a definition of plot:

A Plot, or Tragedy, should arise from the gradual closing in of a situation that comes of ordinary human passions, prejudices, and ambitions, by reason of the character taking no trouble to ward off the disastrous events produced by the said passions, prejudices, and ambitions.⁴³

Hardy's subject is human life. This means that he regards the human emotions as the centre of all concern. On the other hand, he never forgets that outside forces are also important, and in writing his novels he tries to combine these two things. He also gives us a definition of fiction:

"The whole secret of fiction and the drama—in the constructional part—lies in the adjustment of things unusual to things eternal and universal. The writer who knows exactly how exceptional, and how non-exceptional, his events should be made, possesses the key to the art."⁴⁴

An important characteristic of Hardy's novels is the unity of place. They are called "Wessex" novels after the country which he invented as the scene of his work. Most take place in one particular spot and its surrounding area. All the novels deal more or less with Wessex country life and of his most famous books only Tess and Jude deal with the contemporary life of his maturity; the rest are set in the world of his childhood and his youth. Only a few books deal at all with a big town or a city: Jude with Christminster, The Mayor with Casterbridge, The Hand of Ethelberta, with London.

Before dealing with the subject of plot itself, I would like first to discuss Hardy's style. In it we can see his great imaginative, creative and poetic power. His ✓ description of people, places and things are very pictorial, alive and different and his treatment of country life is always vivid and lively. He tells us much about the customs, traditions and beliefs of country folk, for customary rural ceremonies and merry-making always caught his fancy. He shows us that churchgoing is the customary expedient of provincial girls and men. We are told of the harvest celebration, Christmas gaiety and carol singing. In Under the Greenwood Tree, the Mellstock choir goes around the village at Christmas to visit people and play music. We know of the sending of valentines and shearing-supper in Far from the Madding Crowd, the mummers' plays, lighting of bonfires on Egdon and the Maypole in The Return of the Native, skinmity-ride in The Mayor, and the midsummer rites in The Woodlanders. Hardy's descriptions of dancing and parties which he loved himself as a young man are memorable. We are told of the people's superstitions; a wise woman is consulted by Fancy Day in Under the Greenwood Tree, a weather prophet in The Mayor of Casterbridge, and a conjuror in Tess and in some of the short stories. Also in Tess, the people at Mr. Crick's dairyfarm regard the afternoon crowing of a cock as an ill-omen. A more sinister type of superstition can be seen in The Return of the Native, with the incident of Susan's

magic image. Here is a good example of Hardy's description of the life of people in Casterbridge, the ancient city with its Georgian houses, Gothic churches and a huge prehistoric earthwork:

Thus Casterbridge was in most respects but the pole, focus, or nerve-knot of the surrounding country life; differing from the many manufacturing towns which are as foreign bodies set down, like boulders on a plain, in a green world with which they have nothing in common. Casterbridge lived by agriculture at one remove further from the fountain-head than the adjoining villages—no more. The townsfolk understood every fluctuation in the rustic's condition, for it affected their receipts as much as the labourer's; they entered into the troubles and joys which moved the aristocratic families ten miles round—for the same reason. And even at the dinnerparties of the professional families the subjects of discussion were corn, cattle-disease, sowing and reaping, fencing and planting; while politics were viewed by them less from their own standpoint of burgesses with rights and privilege than from the standpoint of their country neighbours. 45

His creative power in writing helps us to see the incidents most vividly. Hardy is also able to give individuality even to conventional characters. Thomasin, in The Return of the Native, is gentle, faithful and timid, like most Victorian heroines; but most of these Victorian heroines are insipid, and she is not. Hardy's poetic power enables him to mix her personality with the innocent, romantic grace which is her charm:

A fair, sweet, and honest country face was revealed, reposing in a nest of wavy chestnut hair. It was between pretty and beautiful. Though her eyes were closed, one would easily imagine the light necessarily shining in them as the culmination of the luminous workmanship around. The groundwork of the face was hopefulness, but over it now lay like a foreign substance a film of anxiety and grief. The grief had been there so shortly as to have abstracted nothing of the bloom, and had as yet but given a dignity to what it might eventually undermine. The

scarlet of her lips had not had time to abate, and just now it appeared still more intense by the absence of the neighbouring and more transient colour of her cheek. The lips frequently parted, with a murmur of words. She seemed to belong rightly to a madrigal—to require viewing through rhyme and harmony. 46

In Tess, he gives a delightful picture of Tess and the three dairymaids, showing clearly their sweetness and naivete:

The rosy-cheeked, bright-eyed quartet looked so charming in their light summer attire, clinging to the roadside bank like pigeons on a roof-slope, that he stopped a moment to regard them before coming close. Their gauzy skirts had brushed up from the grass innumerable flies and butterflies which, unable to escape, remained caged in the transparent tissue as in an aviary. Angel's eye at last fell upon Tess, the hindmost of the four; she, being full of suppressed laughter at their dilemma, could not help meeting his glance radiantly. 47

These humble country girls are complete contrasts to Eustacia Vye, who is described as "Queen of night" and also as "a model goddess" of Egdon Heath which signifies Olympus. Hardy portrays her as a radiant, bewitching and mysterious beauty:

She was in person full-limbed and somewhat heavy; without ruddiness, as without pallor; and soft to the touch as a cloud. To see her hair was to fancy that a whole winter did not contain darkness enough to form its shadow—it closed over her forehead like nightfall extinguishing the western glow. ...

She had pagan eyes, full of nocturnal mysteries, and their light, as it came and went, and came again, was partially hampered by their oppressive lids and lashes; and of these the underlid was much fuller than it usually is with English women. This enabled her to indulge in reverie without seeming to do so—she might have been believed capable of sleeping without closing them up. Assuming that the souls of men and women were visible essences you could fancy the colour of Eustacia's soul to be flamelike. The sparks from it that rose into her dark pupils gave the same impression.

The mouth seemed formed less to speak than to quiver, less to quiver than to kiss. Some might have added, less to kiss than to curl. Viewed sideways, the closing-line

of her lips formed, with almost geometric precision, the curve so well known in the arts of design as the cimarcta, or ogée. The sight of such a flexible bend as that on grim Egdon was quite an apparition. It was felt at once that that mouth did not come over from Sleswig with a band of Saxon pirates whose lips met like the two halves of a muffin. One had fancied that such lip-curves were mostly lurking underground in the South as fragments of forgotten marbles. So fine were the lines of her lips that though full, each corner of her mouth was as clearly cut as the point of a spear. This keenness of corner was only blunted when she was given over to sudden fits of gloom, one of the phases of the night-side of sentiment which she knew too well for her years.⁴⁸

Hardy's poetic treatment can be seen in all his books. Tess is found by the police at the end, in the first mysterious gleam of dawn, asleep among the immemorial stones of Stonehenge. In Far From the Madding Crowd, Bathsheba, walking alone through a wood at night, stumbles against a stranger and, opening her lantern to see who it is, is dazzled by the glittering figure of Troy in scarlet and gold:

The man to whom she was hooked was brilliant in brass and scarlet. He was a soldier. His sudden appearance was to darkness what the sound of a trumpet is to silence. Gloom, the genius loci at all times hitherto, was now totally overthrown, less by the lantern-light than by what the lantern lighted. The contrast of this revelation with her anticipations of some sinister figure in sombre garb was so great that it had upon her the effect of a fairy transformation.⁴⁹

Turning now to the plots themselves, I think that they can be classified in many ways. Lascelles Abercrombie divides Hardy's novels into two main groups: the unimportant and the important ones. The unimportant divides itself into minor novels and annexes. Annexes refer to the books that are more important than minor novels. Minor novels include

Desperate Remedies, A Pair of Blue Eyes, The Hand of Ethelberta, A Laodicean and The Well-Beloved. The annexes include Under the Greenwood Tree, The Trumpet-Major, Two on a Tower, and other short stories. And Hardy's important novels are divided into two groups: dramatic and epic. Far from the Madding Crowd, The Return of the Native, The Woodlanders and The Mayor of Casterbridge have dramatic form; Tess and Jude belong to the epic set. The difference between dramatic and epic form is the degree of complexity; but it is enough to put Tess and Jude distinctly apart from the others. In the four earlier novels the action is a woven intricacy of many curving and recurving lines, carrying the threaded lives of several persons through a single complicated pattern of destiny. Abercrombie explains that in these novels, especially Far from the Madding Crowd, The Return of the Native and The Woodlanders, the interest of the story lies not in one character but a one composed group, as a rule, of four contrasting personalities. The process is not a simple forward motion, but a complicated growth, the whole elaborate event obeying one general trend. The difference between the two sets of novels is the difference between a history of an individual, and a history of the relationships between a group of persons. But The Mayor of Casterbridge, while clearly belonging, as regards its form, to the dramatic class, is in theme, a partial anticipation of the epic. The history of the relationship of the principal characters is

focussed on the individual history of a single man, Michael Henchard.⁵⁰

✓ Hardy's novels, according to his own classification, divide themselves into three groups: Novels of Characters ✓ and Environment, Romances and Fantasies and Novels of Ingenuity. But if we consider only the plots of these books ✓ we might classify them into two main groups: realistic including naturalistic and non-realistic. All Hardy's Novels of Character and Environment belong to the first group and Romances and Fantasies and the Novels of Ingenuity belong to the second group.

✓ By the word Realism I mean the author depicts life in an entirely honest manner, without prejudice or glamour. He deals with the familiar, the natural things instead of the imagined things. And instead of heroic people he portrays the typical, commonplace and even unpleasant people. To make these persons interesting, he probes into the motives, ✓ into their minds to see what is hidden from the world. The characters, together with the emotions and incidents are naturally and realistically drawn. He discusses the admirable side of the characters as well as their weaknesses and defects. Hardy writes about subjects that, at that time, are not discussed in polite society, the things that the Victorians considered improper for instance, the problem of divorce, seduction and so on. Hardy seems to prefer to write about unpleasant things. He feels that literature should

deal with these things because they are a part of life. Realism means also the writing about environment or the world that the writer knows well, with strict regard to such things as natural speech, dress, scene and behaviour. The novels that have realistic plots include Under the Greenwood Tree, Far from the Madding Crowd and The Woodlanders. These three novels have the most ingredients of Realism. But in The Return of the Native, The Mayor, Tess and Jude the plots are primarily naturalistic. In these three books, Hardy goes beyond Realism. Naturalism usually means a type of fictional writing that aims to portray human society and the lives of men and women as objectively and as truthfully as the subject matter of science is studied and is presented. In most naturalistic works, the writer deals with life in a low or working class of society and a hero or heroine represents the vices and weaknesses of a particular type or group, rather than the more conventional individual. But the plots of these three novels of Hardy are not completely naturalistic. Hardy does not portray his characters objectively. He always judges them and even criticizes them. However, there are some elements of Naturalism in his works. In these three novels we see Hardy the pessimist. He emphasizes the social environment of the characters and their subordinate relation to it. Human beings are shown as victims of circumstance. We see his conception of fate in all these books. (see Theme of Fate.) We get a pervading and strong sense of

control over the actions and destinies of characters. This control may sometimes be exerted by either impersonal social or economic forces. Hardy's people are weak and ineffectual when opposed to the will of the universe. No matter how hard man tries to fight he is finally defeated.

Hardy's Romances and Fantasies and the Novels of Ingenuity have non-realistic plots. In these novels we see that plot is the most important thing. Hardy is concerned only to tell a story. He depends totally on coincidences which provide the turns of the plot. So we see that the stories are not naturally drawn. Some of them are fantastic, for example The Well-Beloved which is to be discussed later. Hardy does not pay much attention on the characters. However, it is enjoyable to read about them.

In Under the Greenwood Tree Hardy deals with simple rural life. The most significant figure is the Mellstock choir. We have unity of place in this book. It is clear that he wrote it with a genuine love of and a great admiration for the sort of life he was familiar with from childhood. He expresses his undying love of music and country tradition. The plot itself concerns the happy love story of Fancy Day and Dick Dewy. In Far from the Madding Crowd, we also have unity of place. The story happens mostly in Bathsheba's farm at Weatherbury. The plot concerns the relationships and loves of four persons: Bathsheba, Gabriel Oak, Troy and Fanny Robin. Bathsheba makes a mistake in writing a valentine

letter to a respectable man, Mr. Boldwood, who immediately falls in love with her. Gabriel Oak also loves her but always conceals his feelings because he knows his condition as her servant. Fate makes her fall in love with a Don Juan, Francis Troy, who loves another girl, Fanny Robin, but he never marries her. Troy marries Bathsheba because of her wealth, freshness and glamour. They both soon become miserable. Fanny dies of a broken heart and Troy is almost mad with sorrow and repentance. He disappears from the village and everyone thinks he is dead. Bathsheba almost accepts Boldwood's proposal, though she never loves him, for she wants to make amends for her mistake. Troy comes back and claims her, and is shot by Boldwood, who is imprisoned for life. However, the story ends happily for Gabriel and Bathsheba.

In this story there are many good descriptions. We get a picture of the beautiful English village of Weatherbury in its fertile countryside. At the beginning Hardy describes vividly the sheep farm and the life of a shepherd.

The lamb, revived by the warmth, began to bleat, and the sound entered Gabriel's ears and brain with an instant meaning, as expected sounds will. Passing from the profoundest sleep to the most alert wakefulness with the same ease that had accompanied the reverse operation, he looked at his watch, found that the hour-hand had shifted again, put on his hat, took the lamb in his arms, and carried it into the darkness. After placing the little creature with its mother he stood and carefully examined the sky, to ascertain the time of night from the altitudes of the stars. 51

At Bathsheba's, we get a vivid picture of farm life and sheep-shearing.

It was the first day of June, and the sheep-shearing season culminated, the landscape, even to the leanest pasture, being all health and colour. Every green was young, every pore was open, and every stalk was swollen with racing currents of juice. God was palpably present in the country, and the devil had gone with the world to town. Flossy catkins of the later kinds, fern-sprouts like bishops' croziers, the square-headed moschatel, the odd cuckoo-pint,—like an apoplectic saint in a niche of malachite,—snow-white ladies'-smocks, the toothwort, approximating to human flesh, the enchanter's night-shade, and the black-petaled doleful-bells, were among the quainter objects of the vegetable world in and about Weatherbury at this teeming time;...52

The clean, sleek creature arose from its fleece—how perfectly like Aphrodite rising from the foam should have been seen to be realized—looking startled and shy at the loss of its garment, which lay on the floor in one soft cloud, united throughout, the portion visible being the inner surface only, which, never before exposed, was white as snow, and without flaw or blemish of the minutest kind.53

Another outstanding scene is the sword exercise which Troy shows Bathsheba when he is courting her. Hardy describes how he takes her into a hollow amid the ferns and tells her to stand still. Troy flashes his sword round the motionless Bathsheba, cutting a lock of her hair and splitting the caterpillar on her breast. Bathsheba is frightened and dazzled at the glittering soldier with his dangerous gleaming weapon:

He flourished the sword by way of introduction number two, and the next thing of which she was conscious was that the point and blade of the sword were darting with a gleam towards her left side, just above her hip; then of their reappearance on her right side, emerging as it were from between her ribs, having apparently passed through her body. The third item of consciousness was that

of seeing the same sword, perfectly clean and free from blood held vertically in Troy's hand (in the position technically called 'recover swords'). All was as quick as electricity. ...

In an instant the atmosphere was transformed to Bathsheba's eyes. Beams of light caught from the low sun's rays, above, around, in front of her well-nigh shut out earth and heaven--all emitted in the marvellous evolutions of Troy's reflecting blade, which seemed everywhere at once, and yet nowhere specially. These circling gleams were accompanied by a keen rush that was almost a whistling--also springing from all sides of her at once. In short, she was enclosed in a firmament of light, and of sharp hisses, resembling a sky-full of meteors close at hand.⁵⁴

Here one sees Hardy a poet. The scene is vividly imagined and is also symbolic. Bathsheba is to be trapped by Troy who will almost destroy her. The sword play symbolizes the wound he inflicts on her heart.

The scene of the dying Fanny's last journey through the winter's night to Casterbridge workhouse is very pathetic and well drawn. We see how she drags her exhausted body along by telling herself that each milestone will be the end of her journey. Fortunately she sees a dog, homeless as herself, and leans on him.

Her friend moved forward slowly, and she with small mincing steps moved forward beside him, half her weight being thrown upon the animal. Sometimes she sank as she had sunk from walking erect, from the crutches, from the rails. The dog, who now thoroughly understood her desire and her incapacity, was frantic in his distress on these occasions; he would tug at her dress and run forward. She always called him back, and it was now to be observed that the woman listened for human sounds only to avoid them. It was evident that she had an object in keeping her presence on the road and her forlorn state unknown.⁵⁵

Ironically, the dog who is the only friend who has pity on her, is stoned away when he has brought her to her destination.

Another novel that has a realistic plot is The Woodlanders, which is one of Hardy's best books. The story takes place in the pleasant woodland on the skirts of Blackmoor Vale. Giles Winterborne, an honest, gentle and humble woodlander is in love with Grace Melbury, daughter of a well-to-do Mr. Melbury, a timber-merchant of Little Hintock. Giles is engaged to Grace Melbury. Unfortunately Mr. Melbury wants his daughter to be well-educated, so he sends her to a city school. She returns home a refined and accomplished lady, quite superior to Giles. This makes her father unwilling to consent to her marriage to Giles who at that time loses his house. Giles sees this barrier and he sadly gives her up. Meanwhile Dr. Fitzpiers, another suitor comes on the scene. He seems to be a perfect man but is, in fact, a Don Juan. The fact that he belongs to a noble family makes Mr. Melbury favour Grace's marriage to him. Finally they do get married though Grace is reluctant because of her suspicion of the relationship between Fitzpiers and Suke Danson, a country girl living there. Fitzpiers proves to be completely unfaithful, for he is easily bewitched by the charming and wealthy widow, Felice Charmond; and finally he runs away with her to the continent, leaving his wife behind. Mr. Melbury wants to make amends for his mistake; therefore, he tries to secure a divorce for his daughter so that she can marry Giles. And at that time Grace and Giles become lovers again. Finally they find that Grace has no hope of

being granted a divorce. Fitzpiers comes back to the village after the death of Mrs. Charmond. His reappearance causes Grace to run away from home and go to Giles to ask for help. Having been ill for a long time Giles cannot accompany her to her friend's. Owing to his delicacy and respect for the proprieties he gives her his hut while he himself goes to sleep in a shelter of hurdles. He dies of exposure, and Grace is reconciled to Fitzpiers. Parallel to Giles's devotion to Grace is the devotion of Marty South to Giles. Marty is a typical honest Wessex girl who is faithful to Giles all her life and keeps visiting Giles's tomb regularly.

This book is very well written. Hardy gives us the vivid picture of the life of the humble woodlanders. We are told of their interest, their work, their amusement and their thinking. We know of the pleasant midsummer rites when girls run out in the wood at night to seek their sweethearts. All the descriptions of nature and people are beautifully written. The scene of Giles's death is vividly described. We get a picture of the two girls, Marty and Grace, sincerely and mournfully praying for his soul.

The Mayor of Casterbridge is the most important book that has a naturalistic plot. This book is the tragedy of one man, for it concerns Michael Henchard alone, and the conflict of his emotions with the will of the universe. He is shown as the victim of his passion and also of his

circumstance. Henchard commits a great sin in selling his wife at the beginning of the story and he is severely punished all through his life. (see Theme of Fate.) In this book Hardy clearly uses plot to convey abstract themes. Henchard is an exceptionally lonely character and the worst thing is his relationship, changing from friendship to rivalry, with Farfrae. Ironically, he is the person who persuades Farfrae to settle down in Casterbridge, but later he hates him with all his heart. The cause lies mainly in his own nature, for instance, he resents Farfrae's sense of justice. Farfrae always objects to Henchard's severe punishing of his labourers. With kindness and gentleness, Farfrae gradually wins love and respect from the villagers and also from Henchard's labourers, and this creates the bitter rivalry between the two men. Henchard's step-daughter, Elizabeth-Jane, secretly admires Farfrae. The worst blow for Henchard is the love affair of Farfrae and Lucetta, the woman from Jersey who was formerly Henchard's mistress. Henchard and Lucetta are going to be married when Susan comes back, and Henchard has to marry her instead in self-punishment. Lucetta comes to Casterbridge immediately when she hears of the death of Henchard's wife, hoping to marry him. She changes her mind suddenly when she meets Farfrae, for she feels he will make her a better husband. They finally get married, and this brings great bitterness to Henchard. Her death is the punishment Lucetta receives from her fickleness. It is most

improbable that a strong man like Henchard who has made his way by himself, who is a respectable pillar of the city, could quickly lose everything, money, trade, respectability and love. On the other hand, it is almost hard to believe that Farfrae, who is characterless in comparison with Henchard, could rise rapidly, become mayor, and take everything from Henchard. It is almost too much when Henchard becomes Farfrae's workman and later becomes a lodger of Jopp, the man who used to be his workman and who was dismissed by him. Elizabeth-Jane also finds out at the end that it is Newson, and not Henchard, who is her real father. This makes her angry with Henchard for the trick he has played on her and on Newson; this almost drives Henchard mad because at that time he has begun to love her tenderly and sincerely. That is why he cannot live in Casterbridge. It is not Elizabeth and Farfrae who have driven him away from them, but his own proud feeling that his presence is no longer desired. He wanders from place to place as a hay-trusser; but never goes far from Casterbridge for he cannot stand being too far from Elizabeth. He does not lead this life for very long, for he dies shortly after the marriage of Elizabeth and Farfrae. We can see from this story that Hardy meant it to be also symbolic. Henchard is punished again and again all through his life. This, however, is Hardy's way of showing artistically and symbolically that he has destroyed himself and that he is spiritually ruined. Henchard is clearly portrayed

as a victim of his environment.

In this novel Hardy shows himself a real poet. We can see this in his vivid description of the city, its architecture and the life of people seen through a poet's eyes.

Casterbridge announced old Rome in every street, alley, and precinct. It looked Roman, bespoke the art of Rome, concealed dead men of Rome. It was impossible to dig more than a foot or two deep about the town fields and gardens without coming upon some tall soldier or other of the Empire, who had lain there in his silent unobtrusive rest for a space of fifteen hundred years. He was mostly found lying on his side, in an oval scoop in the chalk, like a chicken in its shell; his knees drawn up to his chest; sometimes with the remains of his spear against his arm; a fibula or brooch of bronze on his breast or forehead; an urn at his knees, a jar at his throat, a bottle at his mouth; and mystified conjecture pouring down upon him from the eyes of Casterbridge street boys and men, who had turned a moment to gaze at the familiar spectacle as they passed by. ...

The Amphitheatre was a huge circular enclosure, with a notch at opposite extremities of its diameter north and south. From its sloping internal form it might have been called the spittoon of the Jötuns. It was to Casterbridge what the ruined Coliseum is to modern Rome, and was nearly of the same magnitude. The dusk of evening was the proper hour at which a true impression of this suggestive place could be received. Standing in the middle of the arena at that time there by degrees became apparent its real vastness, which a cursory view from the summit at noon-day was apt to obscure. Melancholy, impressive, lonely, yet accessible from every part of the town, the historic circle was the frequent spot for appointments of a furtive kind. Intrigues were arranged there; tentative meetings were there experimented after divisions and feuds. But one kind of appointment--in itself the most common of any--seldom had place in the Amphitheatre: that of happy lovers.⁵⁶

The sordid district of Mixen Lane where the underworld of the town gathers to plot and revel, is made poetic by the lurid, macabre light with which Hardy's vision suffuses it.

Even when he wishes to create an effect of ugliness, he cannot help tingeing it with a poetic colour:

The lane and its surrounding thicket of thatched cottages stretched out like a spit into the moist and misty lowland. Much that was sad, much that was low, some things that were baneful, could be seen in Mixen Lane. Vice ran freely in and out certain of the doors of the neighbourhood; recklessness dwelt under the roof with the crooked chimney; shame in some bow-window; theft (in times of privation) in the thatched and mud-walled houses by the willows. Even slaughter had not been altogether unknown here.⁵⁷

The other novels that have naturalistic plots are Tess, Jude and The Return of the Native. Tess and Jude, according to Abercrombie, belong to the epic form which the artist's conscience allows to contain an emotional as well as an intellectual judgement of life. Throughout these two books, the atmosphere is charged with a fierce indignation against the fundamental injustice of man's existence. In Tess, Hardy depends more or less on coincidence or chance which provides many turns of the story, as I have already shown. But he uses it artistically and the story is woven naturally and beautifully. With only the history of a simple girl, Tess, to be told, only a continuity of events from beginning to end is needed. The story begins when Jack Durbeyfield learns that he is descended from the famous but deteriorated D'Urberville family. Being proud, he stops working immediately, and even before this he has never worked seriously. His wife goes further than this by persuading their oldest daughter, Tess, to visit the Stroke-d'Urbervilles, the rich family who has assumed the d'Urberville name because

no one else claims it. The mother wants her to marry the son of the family. Alec D'Urberville tricks her into living at his house as a poultry maid and later seduces her. Tess never yields to her fate and wants to begin her life again. She comes back home and works in the fields, bravely facing the slander of her acquaintances. After the death of her baby Tess goes to work at Mr. Crick's dairy farm. There she meets Angel Clare, a pastor's son who has rejected the ministry to study farming. All the dairymaids secretly admire Angel but only Tess interests and enchants him. Tess, conscious of her sad experience, urges him to turn to the other dairymaids. She refuses him again and again when he proposes to her, and even tries to tell him of her past, but cannot find an opportunity. Finally she agrees to marry him. Before the wedding day she writes him a letter telling everything about herself and Alec and slips it under his door; but the letter never reaches Angel. On their wedding night, Angel tells her about his past affair with a woman. Tess forgives him and tells him her past. Angel is so stunned and hurt that he cannot speak, and it is clear that he can never forgive her. They decide to separate; Angel goes to Brazil, Tess to her home. Later Tess goes from farm to farm doing hard work in order to support herself and her family. While she is working at Flintcomb-Ash she meets Alec who has become a preacher. The sight of Tess reawakens his original character and he asks her to marry him. Tess

is frightened at this temptation and writes to Angel begging him to forgive her and to return to England. Meanwhile Alec is kind and generous to her family; and having no answer from Angel, Tess decides to go to live with Alec as his wife. Angel comes back to find that Tess has only just married Alec. In her bitter unhappiness Tess desperately kills Alec and runs away with Angel. They are happy for a short time, but Tess is finally captured by the police and is hanged for murder. In this novel we see the conflict between Tess's strong emotions, her passionate and sincere desire to enjoy life, and the circumstance which is against her. She is, therefore, a victim of her environment.

There are many vivid descriptions in this book, such as the beautiful love scene between Tess and Angel, and the charming description of Angel carrying the three dairymaids across the flooded stream. The scene of Tess's christening of her baby is very touching:

She lit a candle, and went to a second and a third bed under the wall, where she awoke her young sisters and brothers, all of whom occupied the same room. Pulling out the washing-stand so that she could get behind it, she poured some water from a jug, and made them kneel around, putting their hands together with fingers exactly vertical. While the children, scarcely awake, awestricken at her manner, their eyes growing larger and larger, remained in this position, she took the baby from her bed—a child's child—so immature as scarce to seem a sufficient personality to endow its producer with the maternal title. Tess then stood erect with the infant on her arm beside the basin, the next sister held the Prayer-book open before her, as the clerk at church held it before the parson; and thus the girl set about baptizing her child.

Her figure looked singularly tall and imposing as she stood in her long white nightgown, a thick cable of twisted dark hair hanging straight down her back to her waist. The kindly dimness of the weak candle abstracted from her form and features the little blemishes which sunlight might have revealed—the stubble scratches upon her wrists, and the weariness of her eyes—her high enthusiasm having a transfiguring effect upon the face which had been her undoing, showing it as a thing of immaculate beauty, with a touch of dignity which was almost regal. The little ones kneeling round, their sleepy eyes blinking and red, awaited her preparations full of a suspended wonder which their physical heaviness at that hour would not allow to become active.

The most impressed of them said:

'Be you really going to christen him, Tess?'

The girl-mother replied in a grave affirmative.

'What's his name going to be?'

She had not thought of that, but a name suggested by a phrase in the book of Genesis came into her head as she proceeded with the baptismal service, and now she pronounced it:

'Sorrow, I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.' 58

Farm life is vividly portrayed: at the dairy we get a picture of a healthy and fruitful life where everything is fresh. The landscape and the weather are beautifully and realistically described:

The bird's-eye perspective before her was not so luxuriantly beautiful, perhaps, as that other one which she knew so well; yet it was more cheering. It lacked the intensely blue atmosphere of the rival vale, and its heavy soils and scents; the new air was clear, bracing, ethereal. The river itself, which nourished the grass and cows of these renowned dairies, flowed not like the streams in Blackmoor. Those were slow, silent, often turbid; flowing over beds of mud into which the incautious wader might sink and vanish unawares. The Fromm waters were clear as the pure River of Life shown to the Evangelist, rapid as the shadow of a cloud, with pebbly shallows that prattled to the sky all day long. There the water-flower was the lily; the crowfoot here. 59

The season developed and matured. Another year's instalment of flowers, leaves, nightingales, thrushes, finches, and such ephemeral creatures, took up their positions where only a year ago others had stood in their place when these were nothing more than germs and inorganic particles. Rays from the sunrise drew forth the buds and stretched them into long stalks, lifted up sap in noiseless streams, opened petals and sucked out scents in invisible jets and breathings.⁶⁰

In Jude, the theme and the plot are more complex than in Tess, but as Abercrombie says, Tess and Jude "are entirely alike in the ruthless forward driving of their theme, and their superb shapeliness of unity!"⁶¹ The story is about Jude, who even in his childhood, hungry for learning, yearns to go to Christminster; instead he has to help his great-aunt, Drusilla Fawley, in her bakery. Phillotson, his former teacher, sends him some classical grammars which the boy studies eagerly. Hoping to earn some money to help him in his studies, Jude apprentices himself to a stone-mason engaged in the restoration of medieval churches in a nearby town. He is tricked into marriage with Arabella. Soon he realizes sadly that he has married a vulgar country girl with whom he has nothing in common. Finding her husband too insipid, Arabella leaves him and goes to Australia. Jude, not giving up his original dream, goes to Christminster where he meets and loves Sue Bridehead, his cousin, who is an artist employed in an ecclesiastical warehouse, and there is immediate sympathy between them. Later, with Jude's assistance, Sue becomes a teacher at Phillotson's school. Jude, who has been rejected by the university, is also hurt by the

intimacy of Sue and Phillotson, and begins to drink, and thus is dismissed by his employer. He goes back to Mary-green and the idea of entering the church comes to him, but he finally gives this up. When Sue wins a scholarship to a teacher's college at Melchester Jude goes to live near her. This brings about the scandal of their spending the night together because of their being delayed. Sue is dismissed from the school and is forced by society to accept Phillotson's offer of marriage, although he repels her physically. Jude comes back to Christminster and again meets Arabella, who has become a barmaid. At this time he finally gives up all idea of the ministry. After the death of Aunt Drusilla, Jude and Sue decide to live together as brother and sister. Phillotson gives Sue a divorce since he sees she and Jude cannot be happy without each other, and thus he loses his teaching position. Finally Sue agrees to be Jude's wife because of her jealousy of Arabella, but they never go through a marriage ceremony. Arabella sends their son to Jude and marries another man. After two children have been born to Sue, Jude's business declines, for the neighbours reject the couple because they are unmarried. They have to travel from town to town. The difficulty of finding lodgings at Christminster drives Father Time, the son of Jude and Arabella, to kill his two half-brothers and himself. The shock makes Sue think she has sinned and, wanting to atone for it, she goes back to Phillotson, whom

she still regards as her husband. Jude begins drinking heavily and once again is tricked into marriage by Arabella. After the last meeting of Jude and Sue, when Jude is very ill, Sue becomes Phillotson's wife completely and Jude goes home only to die. We see that Jude and Sue are the victims of circumstance. They are two persons destined by heaven to be husband and wife. They are born for one another and they are happy to live together. More than sincere mutual affection they have deep understanding of each other which is the best foundation of married life. But it is society that separates them and will not allow them to be man and wife.

We see that Tess is only one woman's life while Jude concerns the lives of Jude and Sue who are far more complicated characters than the humble Tess. Jude shows the life of people in both a small town and a city. Hardy portrays vividly Christminster, the city of learning and the colleges themselves.

The last novel that has a naturalistic plot is The Return of the Native. Unity of place is seen in this book more than in any other, for the whole story takes place in Egdon Heath. The plot concerns conflict between human nature and external forces. Clym is the native who returns to his home on Egdon Heath. He is very intellectual and idealistic. His experience in Paris makes him think his native district backward, uncultured and uncivilized, and he wants to improve the condition of his people. He does

not succeed in his dream, and his failure is due to many causes. The most important one is his marriage to Eustacia who is not at all suitable for him. Eustacia had formerly been in love with Wildeve who, before the return of Clym was the only man on the heath who had a touch of civilization. Wildeve is also in love with Thomasin, Clym's cousin. When Clym appears on the heath Eustacia is instantly fascinated by the fact that he has just come from Paris, the city she has always dreamt of. She leaves Wildeve and Thomasin alone and even tries to help them get married in order to get rid of Thomasin. Eustacia marries Clym because she hopes he will be the means for her to go to Paris. Her marriage leads to disillusionment and she finds that she has been deceived. Clym prefers to live on Egdon Heath, so Eustacia becomes desperately frustrated. She secretly arranges to meet Wildeve who has become a millionaire and persuades him to take her away from the heath which she hates. Because of their rebellion both Clym and Eustacia are severely punished. Finally Clym becomes blind for a while and loses his beloved mother through his heartless wife; Eustacia drowns herself. So ends the life of the emotional woman, who is all her life the victim of her passion and of her circumstance. Wildeve is also drowned when he tries to help her; and thus he is punished for his fickleness. Thomasin marries Diggory Venn who is finally rewarded for his sincere love and faithfulness to her.

This novel goes through an astonishing series of memorable scenes; the bonfire; Eustacia on the heath alone as the 'Queen of Night'; the dicing by the roadside; and superstitious Susan's magic image. The scene of Mrs. Yeobright's lonely walk before her death from exposure is very well described. Here again we get Hardy's conception of the pettiness of man as opposed to the power of nature. Mrs. Yeobright is a hopeless creature in the vast landscape:

Mrs. Yeobright's exertions, physical and emotional, had well-nigh prostrated her; but she continued to creep along in short stages with long breaks between. The sun had now got far to the west of south and stood directly in her face, like some merciless incendiary, brand in hand, waiting to consume her. With the departure of the boy all visible animation disappeared from the landscape, though the intermittent husky notes of the male grasshoppers from every tuft of furze were enough to show that amid the prostration of the larger animal species an unseen insect world was busy in all the fullness of life.

In two hours she reached a slope about three-fourths the whole distance from Alderworth to her own home, where a little patch of shepherd's-thyme intruded upon the path; and she sat down upon the perfumed mat it formed there. In front of her a colony of ants had established a thoroughfare across the way, where they toiled a never-ending and heavy-laden throng. To look down upon them was like observing a city street from the top of a tower. She remembered that this bustle of ants had been in progress for years at the same spot—doubtless those of the old times were the ancestors of these which walked there now. She leant back to obtain more thorough rest, and the soft eastern portion of the sky was as great a relief to her eyes as the thyme was to her head. While she looked a heron arose on that side of the sky and flew on with his face towards the sun. He had come dripping wet from some pool in the valleys, and as he flew the edges and lining of his wings, his thighs, and his breast were so caught by the bright sunbeams that he appeared as if formed of burnished silver. Up in the zenith where he was seemed a free and happy place, away from all contact with the earthly ball to which she was

pinioned; and she wished that she could arise uncrushed from its surface and fly as he flew then.⁶²

Hardy's Novels of Ingenuity and his Romances and Fantasies have non-realistic plots. The Novels of Ingenuity include Desperate Remedies, The Hand of Ethelberta, and A Laodicean. A Pair of Blue Eyes, The Trumpet-Major, Two on a Tower and The Well-Beloved are his Romances and Fantasies.

Desperate Remedies is Hardy's first novel. It does not seem to be original. It is conventional and melodramatic. The story contains mystery, surprise, excitement and moral teaching. Cytherea Graye is in love with a young architect, Edward Springrove. Being very poor Cytherea is forced to be the maid of Miss Aldcliffe, the woman who used to be her father's sweetheart. In fact, Miss Aldcliffe has a sincere affection for George Graye but they never get married. Her secret relation with a cousin results in the birth of Aeneas Mauston, an illegitimate son. Cytherea, having heard that Edward is already engaged and having to support a sick brother, finally accepts the hand of Aeneas, the villain whose wife is believed to have died in a fire. Before the wedding ceremony takes place Cytherea discovers that Edward is free from his engagement and this saves her from the fatal marriage. Finally they find out that Aeneas has murdered his wife in order to marry Cytherea. The story ends happily for George and Cytherea. We see that this novel is full of action and incidents. The author pays attention only to the plot and nothing else. The characters

are not very well drawn. So it is not a very good novel.

The Hand of Ethelberta and A Laodicean are not so very well written as Desperate Remedies. In The Hand of Ethelberta, the heroine, Ethelberta, is a very ambitious, beautiful and strong minded woman who is only a butler's daughter. She has many brothers and sisters whom she has to support. In her youth she marries Mr. Petherwin and is left a widow when she is still very young. Throughout the story she tries her best to maintain her social position and to conceal the fact that she is a butler's daughter. After the death of Lady Petherwin, her mother-in-law, she is left only the lease of the town-house and the furniture in it. She tries her fortune as a story-teller and succeeds in this job only for a while. Being afraid to lose her social position she marries Lord Mountclere, a wicked old peer, and finally succeeds in ruling him. Christopher Julian, her former admirer, turns to Picottee, her sister, and finally marries her through the help of Ethelberta. This is primarily the story of a single girl who is too strong to yield to her fate and never cares whether she will be happy or not so long as she is the victor.

In A Laodicean, Hardy's interest is in Miss Paula Power who is the leading character. She is the daughter of a successful railway contractor and is presented as a Laodicean. She is faced with the ordeal of being baptized according to the rites of the Baptist persuasion to which

her father belonged. She is unable to perform the rites because of her lack of belief. Hardy shows her as a woman with a modern spirit. She loves George Somerset but at the same time she is fascinated by Captain de Stancy because he is the heir of an ancient but no longer prosperous family which once owned the Castle de Stancy in which she now lives. This shows her romantic spirit. Willy Dare, de Stancy's illegitimate son, tries his best to make his father marry Paula so that he will regain the castle. He tries to blacken the character of George to make Paula give him up. Finally the truth is revealed and Paula finds out George's good nature. In the end, she marries George but her Castle is burnt down by Dare.

A Pair of Blue Eyes is also not a very well-written book. The story takes place on the northern coast of Cornwall. Stephen Smith, a young architect comes to Endelstow to restore a church tower. He meets and falls in love with Elfride Swancourt, an innocent blue-eyed girl whose father is a snobbish vicar. At first he encourages her to love Stephen. Later they find out that he is only the son of a humble mason. The vicar resents the idea of his daughter's marrying a mason's son. Because of impulses and youthful passion Elfride runs away with Stephen to London, hoping to get married there. But the girl changes her mind and comes back home, while Stephen leaves for India to seek his fortune. Then comes Henry Knight, a very intellectual man of letters

who is Stephen's friend and patron. Elfride is fascinated by his wide knowledge and good taste, however, she tries to control her emotions and be faithful to her first love. But the adventure on the cliff when Elfride saves his life brings them together as lovers. Finally Knight finds out the truth of her elopement with Stephen and also of her being kissed by him. However intellectual Knight is, he is a totally inexperienced and idealistic man who has never kissed any woman. He expects her to be as completely innocent as he is, and is very disappointed at the truth. He abruptly breaks off the engagement and leaves Elfride. Later Henry and Stephen meet and Henry learns the truth of her elopement. The two men come back to claim her, but they only find that the train that carries them also carries her coffin. We learn that Elfride married Lord Luxellian without loving him and finally died of a broken heart. As already discussed, this novel contains many coincidences.

In The Trumpet-Major Hardy shows the life of English country people living in an old and traditional village. The tone is humorous, gay and also a little sad because of the failure in love of John Loveday, the trumpet-major. The whole book has a historical background, for it deals with rural England in Napoleonic times. It is about the two Loveday brothers who love the same girl. The story expresses the distress of a girl, Anne, who, endeavouring to control her love and give it to the more worthy of her suitors,

cannot help but love the less worthy. Everything ends happily for her, but it is, nevertheless sad, for its hero is the trumpet-major, John, who makes endless sacrifices for his brother. But it is not a tragedy, and the bitterness is relieved by the comic characters, Uncle Benjy and his nephew, Festus Derriman, and also by the strength of John. The book contains some fantastic incidents, the most significant one occurs when George The Third stops to speak to Anne as she walks disconsolately back from seeing the Victory go off to sea. The descriptions in this story are vivid and alive. "It is one of those books that seems to make us live with purged sense, nothing escapes us."⁶³ We get a picture of the troop of soldiers watering their horses and we hear the sailor talking about Trafalgar.

"His words are accompanied by a softly-hummed melody—Anne unconsciously singing to herself for joy that her lover is safe (before she learns that his safety means his treachery to her love)".⁶⁴

Another exquisite invention is that episode when Bob, in order to win back Anne, makes her a little Aeolian harp and hangs it at the mill, outside her window, so that the breeze makes it tremble all through the autumn night, touching her heart with wistful sadness:

He arose, and Anne followed with curiosity in her eyes, and with her firm little mouth pouted up to a puzzled shape. On reaching the mossy mill-head she found that he had fixed in the keen damp draught which always prevailed over the wheel an Aeolian harp of large size. At present the strings were partly covered with a cloth. He lifted it, and the wires began to emit a weird harmony which mingled curiously with the plashing of the wheel. . . .

Every night after this, during the mournful gales of autumn, the strange mixed music of water, wind and strings met her ear, swelling and sinking with an almost supernatural cadence. The character of the instrument was far enough removed from anything she had hitherto seen of Bob's hobbies; so that she marvelled pleasantly at the new depths of poetry this contrivance revealed as existent in that young seaman's nature, and allowed her emotions to flow out yet a little further in the old direction, notwithstanding her late severe resolve to bar them back.

One breezy night, when the mill was kept going into the small hours, and the wind was exactly in the direction of the water-current, the music so mingled with her dreams as to wake her: it seemed to rhythmically set itself to the words, 'Remember me! think of me!' ...65

The use of coincidence is significant in Two on a Tower as I have already shown. The story concerns a deserted wife—Lady Constantine who is left in England by her husband, Sir Blount, who goes hunting in Africa. Being selfish and jealous, he insists that she shall not attend any social functions during his absence. She makes a vow to avoid society, but becomes very lonely and yearns for friends. She is immediately attracted by Swithin, a young astronomer. She falls deeply in love with him and devotes all her time and money to him. He, later, thinks he also loves her. This is because of his inexperience and gratitude to her. In fact, he only loves his studies. Here, Hardy uses many coincidences to provide the turns of the story. (see Theme of Fate). The marriage of Viviette and Swithin turns out to be illegal because the report of Sir Blount's death was false. Yet when he does die, Viviette decides not to repeat the marriage, but to give Swithin up so that he can pursue

his studies. Swithin, then, goes to Cape Town and stays there till he finishes his work. With her brother's encouragement and because of her own despair in finding that she is pregnant Viviette marries the Bishop of Melchester who dies soon after she has given birth to a son. Swithin comes back to England and finds that Viviette is getting old. Out of pity, he tells her that he will marry her if she wishes. The result of his declaration is Viviette's death from the shock of joy and surprise.

The book has many details of astronomy and vivid descriptions of nature:

The sky had a new and startling beauty that night. A broad, fluctuating, semicircular arch of vivid white light spanned the northern quarter of the heavens, reaching from the horizon to the star Eta in the Greater Bear. It was the Aurora Borealis, just risen up for the winter season out of the freezing seas of the north, where every autumn vapour was now undergoing rapid congelation.

'O, let us sit and look at it!' she said; and they turned their backs upon the equatorial and the southern glories of the heavens to this new beauty in a quarter which they seldom contemplated.

The lustre of the fixed stars was diminished to a sort of blueness. Little by little the arch grew higher against the dark void, like the form of the Spirit-maiden in the shades of Glenfinlas, till its crown drew near the zenith, and threw a tissue over the whole waggon and horses of the great northern constellation. Brilliant shafts radiated from the convexity of the arch, coming and going silently.⁶⁶

The Well-Beloved is Hardy's last novel. At the time he wrote this novel Hardy was so much disgusted by the unreasonable criticism against Tess and Jude that he had decided to write no more novels. The Well-Beloved is

completely different from all of his other novels, for it is a kind of fantasy. It is not at all like real life. The scene of the story is the Isle of Slinger. The story deals with the peculiar temperament of Jocelyn Pierston, the sculptor who falls in love first with the girl, Avice Caro, then with her daughter, and then with her granddaughter. This, of course, is pleasant to read and cannot be regarded seriously. The theme, on the other hand, is intended to be serious. Hardy wishes to illustrate that love is a great deceiver. When a man thinks he is in love with a particular person he is not really in love with her as she is, but he is in love with an ideal girl whom he temporarily identifies with a living person. Jocelyn is seeking his ideal Well-Beloved. He is prevented from marrying any of these three women. Finally when he is old he marries an elderly widow, Marcia Bencomb, and loses his ideal.